

I had watched enough true crime to know that you should never talk to the police. And I wasn't arrogant enough to believe that I was different. While I felt like I knew the interrogation tactics in and out, they were repeat customers of that interaction. I wasn't going to call. I was going to ignore it. I'm not getting Reid technique.

Why did they ask for me? This house was owned by my mother, how do they even know I live here? Wait who am I kidding, of course they know. I went to high school here, governments have records of that kind of thing. But still, why ask for me?

Another thing was odd. We lived in Brooklyn, aka Kings County. Not Nassau County. These guys must have driven all the way here on a Saturday night. I felt like I was being watched. They wouldn't drive all the way here to just leave a business card. I felt trapped in the house. Like they were a mountain lion on a rock perch and I was the prey in the valley below. They had the high ground and I didn't know what they could see.

But this was crazy, I didn't do anything! Should I call them? Figure out what they want? No! That's exactly what they want. They know I feel like this. This is exactly what they are going for. Another system carefully crafted based on years and years of "user feedback" designed to manipulate you into doing what it wants.

But what if I'm doing what they want right now? Maybe they don't want me to call. Maybe the real goal is to figure out what I do next. Watching and hoping I'll go check on the body or something. But there wasn't a body! If I did commit a crime this would all be a lot easier, I'd know why they were here and what they wanted and could plan my next move accordingly.

I opened another Bud Light, took my clothes off, and got into bed. Even though there was nobody else home, I kept the sound off on the porn. Just in case they were listening. After I finished, I felt a bit more calm. Dude get a grip, all they did was leave a business card.

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Coming out of the paranoid spiral a bit, I realized what it must be about. It must have had to do with my Dad's meeting. That was in Long Island, aka Nassau County. Probably some dumb financial crap. My mother was out with

her friends in Manhattan, but she'd be home tonight and maybe she knew what the meeting was. From both a fear of monitored communication and a fear of spreading my paranoia, this wasn't worth texting her about.

It was now twenty to nine and I texted Brian. He's like yea bro Dave just got here come through. And you still have that case of Bud Light? I put the beers in a backpack. Is this what the detective planned? Maybe I was playing right into the plot; arrest me for underage possession of alcohol and then get me to talk about what I knew. But I didn't even know anything!

This whole thing was stupid. I thought about how I got the beers, wondering if the whole thing was somehow a set-up. Totally nonsense thought. Kids buy beer with fake IDs all the time.

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When I got to Brian's everything was normal. I walked around the back of his house and opened the screen door to his basement. There were three leather couches in a U-shape, two of which were sparsely occupied by Brian and Dave. I took my place on the third empty one and put my backpack on the center ottoman.

"Pretty cool, right? Yea I found it in my Dad's old stuff." said Brian, referring to the inflated bag atop a device labeled *Volcano* sharing the ottoman with my backpack.

"What is it?"

"Bro it's like an old vape. You put the weed in and plug it in to the wall." He detached the cloudy bag from the device and demonstrated. If you pushed on the mouthpiece, it let air through and you could breathe in the vaporized drug. "It's like a bong but chill."

I inhaled. This probably wasn't smart with how paranoid I was from the interaction earlier, but I felt safe in the basement. It was a summer night, I was with friends, I had drank beer. Life was good.

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Dave showed us this reel. It was a mouse in a maze, and it started from the mouse's perspective. Kind of like a skater cam, wow these things could scurry. Then it zoomed out so you could see the maze from the perspective of the experimenter. Then seeing the back of his head looking down at the maze, cutting to sped up dashcam video of him driving home from work.